

# Discovering Partnership at Crofton Baptist Church

## Why is 'partnership' important?

Here at Crofton Baptist Church, we have moved to the using the term 'partner' rather than 'member'. For many today the concept of Membership tends to emphasize 'benefits' and 'what's in it for me? Whereas partnership emphasises a sense of togetherness; a shared sense of purpose around a common goal; that we are part of something that is active and dynamic; and that we are choosing to play our part. Partnership is less about special privileges and more about intentional accountability and oversight in our discipleship to Jesus. We believe that partnership unites us around our shared vision of 'helping people follow Jesus' and reflects our shared values more clearly. For us partnership is something living, real and present, it emphasizes the understanding that we all have a part to play, and for that reason we ask our partners to renew their partnership agreement every two years.

Church partnership is for all believers, but for believers only. Because of that it is important that each local church has a process for identifying the specific people they are called to care for and exercise oversight over (Heb. 13:17). It is equally important for the church partners to know the specific people they are partnering with on mission (Heb. 10:24) and the local leadership they are choosing to come under.

## Partnership is Biblical -

The New Testament pattern is that every Christian should be committed to a specific local church and under the spiritual care of appointed leadership. It is through the local church that God desires the Christian life to be lived out.

You won't find any verses in the Bible that explicitly says that you must become a member of a church. But what you will find is that this concept of partnership is woven through The Bible from beginning to end.

The Bible begins with the perfect partnership that exist between Father, Son and Holy Spirit, working perfectly together, complementing one another, pointing to each other. The constant refrain of scripture is one of partnership 'I will be their God and they will be my people'.

The language of partnership runs right through the Bible story so it shouldn't surprise us that it's the concept of partnership that describes the relationship that draws us into our church family. In fact, there are over 59 'one another' commands in the New Testament' and they all speak the language of partnership e.g., accepting one another, caring for one another, committing to one another, being accountable to one another - these commands

only make sense in the context of an identified group of 'one another's' which is the local church.

### **Partnership reflects church as it is intended to be -**

The most powerful description of the church that is found anywhere in the New Testament is the picture of a human body and its complete interdependence. It's a brilliant analogy- 1 Cor 12:14 'for the body does not consist of one part but of many'. The language that Paul uses is that of belonging and being a 'part' of the body of Christ. Partnership is the best word to describe the organic community that already exists in the body of Christ. To reject partnership is to deny what God has already established in Christ.

It's significant that when Paul was writing to the church in Philippi, he explicitly uses the language of partnership- 'Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy, for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News from the time you first heard it until now. (Philippians 1:3-5)

Crofton Baptist Church is an active growing and increasingly diverse church family. Consequently, our congregation contains a mixture of those who are partners and those who are not. Whilst we encourage everyone to play a part in church life our ultimate hope is that all in our church will come to the place of taking the important step of partnering with us.

### **Partnership nurtures togetherness-**

The description of the early church in Acts Ch 2 begins with these powerful words in v42 -They 'devoted' themselves. The Greek word for 'devoted' literally means, to join, to adhere, to be ready, to give attention to, to be faithful.

This phrase is one of the most inspiring and vivid descriptions of the early church. They are first words ever written about the church and are a springboard that launched them in a new direction that radically changed the way people served and worshipped God.

Individualist Christianity is a myth. Lone-Range Christianity is a dangerous pursuit. As followers of Jesus, not only have we been saved into a new life, but we've been placed into a larger family. And this larger family brings with it benefits that going at it alone never could. For instance, being part of a specific church family ensures that we have a group of people who are publicly committed to loving, serving and watching over each other (Heb. 10:24).

Does that mean that if you choose not to partner with us that we will care for you any less? Absolutely not! As a church we want to look after everyone to the very best of our ability. Partnership is an individual choice that we make before God and one another.

So, what we are saying is that 'partnership' has the potential to draw us more deeply in to a practical and tangible spiritual family that has our backs and is committed to helping one another follow Jesus.

### **Partnership is practical –**

As we have already mentioned, partnership suggests by its very wording that we are part of something bigger. It implies that we are making a deliberate decision to play our part.

In practical terms that means doing all that we can to be present at our 'together' times both on Sundays and at other times when we meet both in larger and smaller groups. It means recognising that we all have a part to play because God has gifted each one of us in a way that is for the common good of the whole church family. At Crofton Baptist Church we love helping people to identify and use their spiritual and practical gifts. Serving one another is a wonderful and practical way of increasing the sense of involvement and belonging.

Playing our part also means giving (as we are able) to support the work of the church financially both at home and overseas, being part of a Life Group, a prayer triplet or smaller group. It also means making every effort to be present at our Partnership Meetings as we sense God's leading presence together, where new ideas are shared, important discussions take place and decisions are reached together.

### **So why become a partner at CBC?**

Well, essentially Biblical partnership means standing together before God and doing life together with God and partnership is a radical expression of that. It recognises that we can do so much more together than we can do on our own. It recognises the Biblical concept that we all have gifts from God that are designed to be used for the benefit of the whole church family.. The Bible is full of exciting stories of what happens when God partners with human beings. The story of the early church and be reminded that their partnership led to thousands of new believes being added to the church.

Here are five practical reasons for partnering with us at Crofton Baptist Church -

- 1 Partnership says, "I belong here" and God says that "believers belong together". (Hebrews 10:23-25). In other words, you sense that God wants you to identify with a particular group of local believers, and you want to make a public declaration that you are committed to God's work through this Church.
- 2 Partnership says, "we share the same ministry goals", and God says that "believers are to be committed to one another for the sake of spiritual impact" (Ephesians 4:16). You believe that Jesus has work to do both at home and overseas and you are willing to join with others to see that it is done.
3. Partnership says, "I accept my responsibility for a group of fellow believers in the family of God", and that is God's plan as well. (Galatians 6:1-2, 10). You want to be part of a caring network of people, sharing one another's joys and sorrows and helping each other through worship, Bible study and fellowship.
4. Partnership says, "I am accountable to other Christians for my walk with God," and God warns against spiritual autonomy. (Hebrews 13:17; Matthew 18: 15-20). You do not want to go it alone in standing for Jesus Christ, and want to receive the guidance, equipping and assistance necessary to remain on target.
5. Partnership says, "I accept responsibility for how things are done here," and God says, "that is how it should be." (1 Corinthians 12:20-27). Partners elect Staff Members, Elders and Leadership Team Members, approve the annual ministry budget, as well as call Pastors to serve as spiritual leaders. Every partner has the opportunity to shape the Church's direction and goals.

## How can I become a partner at Crofton Baptist Church?

There are four steps to becoming a Partner at Crofton Baptist Church –

- 1 – We feel it's important for you to get to know us and for us to get to know you before exploring partnership together but as soon as you feel ready, we would encourage you to speak to one of the Pastors/ Church Leaders to express your interest.
- 2 – We will arrange to meet with you and talk through the Vision and Values of Crofton Baptist Church. We will also explain the privileges, responsibilities, and practices of Partnership at CBC. We can also explore with you how and where your gifts and passions can add to the life of our church family.
- 3 – Agree with our basis of faith [Basis of faith- Evangelical Alliance \(eauk.org\)](http://eauk.org)
- 4 – Willing to sign the Partnership Agreement

## Crofton Baptist Church- Partnership Agreement (draft)

Partnership is a wonderful and practical way of affirming our desire to stand with other Christians around the Vision, Mission and Values of the church family at Crofton Baptist Church. Partnership is not a contract but a visible symbol that we are covenanting ourselves to one another and that we are making ourselves available to God for gospel service in his world.

Having accepted Christ as my Saviour and being in agreement with Crofton Baptist's Church basis of faith I want to enter into this Partnership Agreement with the Crofton Baptist Church family. I have read the Church's Mission statement and commit to engage in this mission as a diligent, faithful disciple of Jesus.

As a Partner of Crofton Baptist Church, I am affirming that –

1. **We Believe** – by affirming the statement of faith of Crofton Baptist Church, accepting that I am accountable to other Christians for my walk with God and doing all I can to protect the unity and testimony of our church.
2. **We Gather** – by choosing to identify with others in my church family by participating regularly in our together times by affirming that I belong here.
3. **We Share**- by committing to sharing with others through the Holy Spirit in the life and love of God, belonging to a caring network of people, identifying and sharing the gifts God has given, encouraging one another and sharing one another's joys and sorrows.
4. **We Serve**- by agreeing to play my part in the Vision, Values and Mission of Crofton Baptist Church recognizing that we are called to be a worshipping, sacrificial, inclusive and prophetic community.
5. **We Covenant** – with God's help, making myself accountable to God alongside others in our church family for the mission of God. Choosing to take responsibility for how things are done by being present at regular Partnership Meetings and practically supporting the financial budgets as I am able.

I understand that this agreement obligates me to the partners of Crofton Baptist Church and is an acknowledgement of my support of the church's leadership. (Ephesians 5:21). I accept the responsibility to notify Crofton Baptist Church leadership if at any time I can no longer commit to this agreement, or if I have any questions, comments or concerns regarding Crofton Baptist Church.

Signed

Date